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HARRIS-NIH DISPUTE CONTINUES

Tension between HHS Secretary Patricia Harris and National Institutes of Health Director Dr. Donald Fredrickson over health research legislation (see p.3) is building to a point where rampant rumors of an imminent Fredrickson departure (his press office denies them) are depressing morale at the once-proud research campus. Harris has been vigorously insisting that she'll run things; Fredrickson quietly, but firmly resisting. In a related incident last week Dr. Burke Zimmerman, NIH lobbyist, was relieved of his job by Fredrickson -- reportedly on Harris' orders. Zimmerman had clashed with Dr. Martin Kagnoff, a University of California researcher who, on sabbatical, has been writing the research legislation for the House Commerce Health Subcommittee while still holding an NIH grant. HHS insiders grumble that Fredrickson didn't bring up the subject of the grant until he began to rankle at Kagnoff's bill scaling down the power of the NIH director. The three-way tussle between HHS headquarters, NIH, and the Health Subcommittee of Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) has been sending sparks in every direction.

Fredrickson is reported to have received a letter from Kagnoff complaining about a shortage of rats under his NIH supported research project. Fredrickson, irritated at Kagnoff, is said to have shown the letter around. Kagnoff was unavailable for comment. Waxman was too.